

Summary of Dissertation: - Decoding Deradicalization: Policy Recommendations for Pakistan

Research carried out on deradicalization programs remains disconnected and disparate. The academic side caters sufficiently to the structural and conceptual aspects of such programs but the practical and operational knowledge remains divorced and distinct. In order to bridge the gap between both the academic and operational domains of deradicalization programs and to formulate prudent policy recommendations, the thesis takes into account the body of literature available as well as the deradicalization programs in place in certain states, and analyzes them to develop insights that may benefit not only Pakistan but also other global partners to meet the common goal of keeping our societies safe and peaceful. Keeping in view the significance of methodical assessment, this thesis identifies those factors that lead to differences in programs adopted and determines whether there is any correct model for deradicalization programs that adheres both to the body of literature and the practices of the states. This results in identification of crucial elements of deradicalization process as well as the components of deradicalization programs and analysis of factors that affect their anticipated trajectory, especially in countries struggling to meet the desired outcomes.

The thesis examines deradicalization programs in place in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Pakistan in separate chapters. Peculiarities of each program are assessed in this structural form so that the findings help achieve the aim of the thesis described above. There are oscillations and undulations of assessment that seek strength from empirical as well as normative aspects of examination and study. Forced categorization of analysis into in popular methodologies is avoided

for deriving an outcome that is clear, valid and credible. It is hoped that the results obtained shall provide a new platform for further research and adding what may have been left.

Chapter 1 encapsulates what has been stated above by segregating them as aim, research questions, structure, methodology, literature review and limitations. Chapter 2 maps the historical context of radicalization and extremism in Pakistan. Analysis is carried out since the independence of Pakistan and how the difference of opinion on the nature of the newly independent state led to emergence of religious forces that denigrated the secular options right from the beginning. Absence of continued political leadership, military interventions and dissatisfactions between the Eastern and Western Pakistan (which ultimately led to separation of Eastern part as Bangladesh) gave leverage to various religious parties to play greater political role in Pakistan in the 1970s. The 1980s saw the external forces take interest in the geopolitical interests in the region and the religious element was exploited by the US and other allies to counter the Soviet expansionism until the fragmentation of the USSR in Afghanistan. This also resulted in emergence of sectarianism due to proxy wars fought at the ideological fronts in Pakistan whether it was Saudi Arabia or Iran. Islamization policy that catered well to Jihad against the Soviets by Mujahideen seeped deep through the sinews of the state and continued to gnaw at the state foundations throughout the 1990s. Later efforts proved futile even when the state realized the price they were paying for patronage of radical seminaries and parties. Various military operations and displacing the residents to cleanse areas has resulted in control of extremism and its manifestation in terrorist incidents. However, the effort continues with little preparation for the large number of radicalized and extremist elements so that they are deradicalized aptly for reintegration in the society.

Chapter 3 examines the efforts taken by Indonesia in addressing the issue of deradicalization and rehabilitation of militants. Policies that have worked effectively in Indonesian context are examined for their suitability of adoption by states like Pakistan because of similarities both countries exhibit, including being the two largest Muslim democracies faced increasingly with Islamic radicalization and extremism. Tracing the origins of how militancy manifested in those who had earlier opted to join Afghan Mujahideen ended up returning to various conflict theatres around the globe, including Indonesia. Emergence of deradicalization programs is the result of the anxiety of states to handle the influx of extremist thought, armed with experience, for reintegration in society as the number of nationals that returned to their respective states was too numerous even if the origins are traced from Dar ul Islam movement of the 1940s to Jemaah Islamiyah and later splinter groups. It may, however, be stated that the process of deradicalizing extremists and militants requires comprehensive measures, both at local as well as global level. Geographical and social dynamics as well as diverse ethos of militant organizations necessitate diverse approaches and policy measures for there is no one patent that fits all. Moreover, resource strain of undertaking reformative measures as well as continued vigilance is at times out of sync with constraints of many states facing terrorism, militancy as well as developmental challenges.

The general approach of handling terrorists and extremists is to proceed against them under the ordinary criminal and anti-terrorism laws, thus rendering the acts of extremism and terrorism criminalized generally. Thus, an effective deradicalization program is still not in place in Indonesia, particularly when most of such inmates are kept at the same detention facilities as the other criminals. In addition, the inadequate training of the deradicalization centre employees and personnel has manifested various lacunae where the extremists and terrorists, even while under detention, have been able to communicate with others and issue religious edicts for their followers

and peers like Aman Abdurrahman. The focus of Indonesian approach, therefore, has been on the already detained individuals serving sentences for their crimes. Accurate interpretation and ideological correction of distorted understanding of Islam is the core of the Indonesian deradicalization and rehabilitation approach, where, like Pakistan, the Wahabi or Salafi ideology is replaced by an objective understanding of Islam as religion as well as a way of life, and where terrorism and suicide bombing are clearly explained as forbidden in Islam. The two-pronged Indonesian strategy, thus, relies on utilization of former deradicalized militants as well as personal relationship between the police, counter terrorism and intelligence officers with the detainees being deradicalized.

The chapter further analyzes how out of a total of four hundred detention centres, only twenty focus on extremists to act as correctional facilities in Indonesia, where the deradicalization programs are divided into four stages, starting with the observation stage, inculcation of shared responsibility, community work and ending at the parole stage. The vocational training aspect to cater to life after parole is also included in the deradicalization programs structure and an officer is assigned to each inmate completing the course so that monitoring is ensured even after the release for counselling and check. While the original foundational deradicalization program was put in place in 2002 after the Bali bombings, the Jakarta bombing of 2009 and an attempt to assassinate the then President necessitated formation of National Agency for Countering Terrorism (BNPT) in 2010, which marked a shift in approach so that diversity of extremist elements could be enveloped. It resulted in change in Anti-Terrorism desk as the focal body and also brought together other sectors of the government in the process as opposed to the largely police dominated programs of the past. Creation of BNPT gave an integrated push to the deradicalization efforts, which purposefully avoided utilization of clerics or Ulema for ideological corrections as they were

never trusted by the extremist. However, the efforts are still in the fledgling state and demand fortification, even when the softer approaches have proved fruitful under BNPT.

The chapter assesses that the success of deradicalization program in Indonesia has been successful in two way. It has bridged the need to belong to social or militant groups for support by offering provision of psycho-social support through focal officers. Moreover, rather than constrained by any duration, the personal connection of officer with detainees ensures continued vigilance by state authorities, which in many states is generally for a period of two years only. These steps if relied upon by other states can add robustness to the deradicalization programs already in place.

Malaysia's deradicalization efforts are analyzed in Chapter 4. Malaysian approach is prudent in the sense that they realized the necessity of identifying their existing shortcomings in deradicalizing the extremists. These included the fluid nature of the threats ranging from Jemaah Islamiyah to the Islamic state, the insufficiency of laws in place, and the growing influx of militant experience through returning extremists from terrorism zones elsewhere. Introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Special Measures against Terrorism in Foreign Countries Act in 2015 reinforce the realization of Malaysian state authorities to attempt deradicalization seriously. In addition, in 2016, the National Security Act further empowered the Security Council to meet the extremist threats effectively.

Other than reinforcing the legal framework regulating deradicalization, Malaysian authorities have tried to take into cognizance the international insights and imperatives too, which is indicative not only by her frequent participation in international workshops and conferences but also her membership of the Financial Action Task Force. On the internal front, to boost effectiveness of

deradicalization strategy, Malaysian authorities have ensured effective liaison between the Home Ministry, the Prisons Department, Police, education sector as well as the religious sector, which the authorities claim have helped deal with IS and Daesh threat.

Keeping in view the fact that Malaysian population is largely Muslim, and threats posed to the state as far as extremism is concerned emanate mostly from the Islamist groups, the deradicalization program is chalked out in consonance with Islamic principles and jurisdiction with focus on counselling through rectification of misinterpreted and mistaken radical views of apprehended extremists and militants. This is in line with the goal of the Malaysian deradicalization program, which is reintegration of the detained radicalized elements back into the society without the risk of recurrent threat. In order to reduce recidivism, welfare of the individuals and their families is assured both socially as well as financially.

In contrast with other states, the Malaysian authorities recognize that the process of deradicalization is an intangible process, where the measure of success is extremely difficult. It is for this reason that the deradicalization programs implemented in Malaysia do not follow any specific duration and is a continued process even after the sessions for inmates are culminated in two or three years in the sense that engagement with the deradicalized detainee is kept intact through continual interaction and monitoring. On the whole, however, the deradicalization programs in place in Malaysia are divided into phases where the first phase, spanning around six months, focuses on chiselling initial orientation of the detainees undergoing deradicalization. The next phase for similar duration (or extended at times) caters to the rehabilitative aspect of the detainees where it is carried out through exchange with Islamic scholars and experts. While the overall responsibility of the deradicalization program lies with the Royal Malaysian Police, both

Ministry of Home Affairs as well as the Department of Islamic Department share responsibilities in these phases. The next phase that stretches over a period of about eight months focus, with the help of sessions and courses, on regeneration of personality and self-development as an extension of the previous phases. The final fourth phase tries to inculcate positive attitude for enhancement of social skills and relationships through increased moral clarity.

After completion of the program, the inmates who undergo deradicalization program are evaluated from different aspects including performance on the religious front, psychological domain as well as the Digital Voice Stress Analysis method. On this basis, reports are generated and 20% grading is secured for the detainee program (based on lectures and sessions), 40% grading is given by the counsellors and deradicalization officers for moral and religious gain up to 40%, and the final 40% fall within the ambit of Voice Stress Analysis. As stated earlier, the Counter Terrorism Special Branch has expressed insufficiency of two to three years duration for complete reformation and deradicalization.

Many experts believe that the claim of Malaysian authorities regarding the success of deradicalization program is doubtful, particularly when the statistics are not public and there is absence of information for researchers to conduct further examination and experiments on the deradicalization in place. Moreover, there is need for greater reliance and control of social media as the growing influence of the Islamic State and consequent radicalization is largely due to advantageous reliance on such media. The data analyzed suggests that out of a total of 154 Jihadists that underwent the deradicalization program, 148 stood completely deradicalized. However, of these later deradicalized detainees, six joined the Islamic State in Syria after its growing influence, which certainly undermines the efficacy of the deradicalization program. Those who were

undergoing the program at the time of research since 2016, 135 militants were connected to Islamic State (detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act), of whom only 09 were about to complete the third phase in January 2018. An important aspect of the deradicalization program is that the authorities want to enfold indirect factors while deradicalizing the detainees, including poverty and illiteracy, among other environmental factors, which the authorities believe have significant impact on the extent of radicalization.

On the whole, there are similarities between the programs in place in Malaysia and Pakistan, ranging from the duration of the programs to other aspects like psychological support, social assistance, utilization of religious experts and rectification of religious misinterpretations, unlike the Indonesian program that does not utilize expertise of authoritative religious figures due to little respect among the detainees for them.

Singapore's deradicalization program is analyzed in Chapter 5. The origins of the deradicalization program can be traced to the period right after 9/11 when the Internal Security Department exposed various plots of terrorists belonging to Jemaah Islamiyah, boasting affiliation with Al-Qaeda, to target diplomats and sensitive areas in Singapore. This unfolds that the linkages for engagement among militant organizations seek strength due to ideological connections. This explains the focus of Singaporean deradicalization program not only on disengagement but also on rehabilitation through deradicalization through rectification of ideological deviations of the militant detainees who during detention remain distant from the influence of leadership of militant organizations.

Although Religious Rehabilitation Group assists the state authorities in the deradicalization program, the program in itself is not merely a rehabilitative program. This is evident from the fact

that the deradicalization program in Singapore has a major focus on major ideological component catering to the Islamic extremists (who require engagement through dialogues to reach clarity about the right interpretation of Islam). As seen earlier, the Indonesian deradicalization program is not only under resourced but amorphous in nature, dependent largely on the officers tasked for detainees. Singaporean as well as the Malaysian programs are similar in the sense that they are well-structured, and lay equal emphasis on post-release monitoring.

This focus on the ideological component resulted when it was assessed by the Singaporean authorities that the detained terrorists and extremists did not possess even an acceptable understanding of Islam, and that there was a possibility to instil in them the accurate interpretations and practices of Islam. This component was further strengthened by the fact that Muslim scholars showed eagerness to engage with these detainees. Rehabilitation in this sense is a sub-category of the deradicalization program in Singapore. The major components of the deradicalization program include psychological rehabilitation. This component is not altruistic in aim but serves to achieve the goal of neutralization of threat from the detainees. The next component is religious recuperation, which serves not only in removing misunderstanding of religion in Singaporean context but also builds social resilience through utilization of Muslim scholars and individuals from Muslim community. In this sense, another aim of curtailing polarization of Muslim community in Singapore is also achieved.

The socio-communal reintegration component of the deradicalization program caters to preparation after release, keeping society, and not the detainee, as the main focus of this phase and families of detainees are also taken on board so that the dangers of extremism are not passed on to the next generation. This requires preparing those undergoing the deradicalization program for job

prospects after release and dynamics of financial support from the state. This aspect of deradicalization program of personal connection, deradicalization, family involvement and reintegration of society by Singapore is what Sidney Jones calls ‘a stroke of genius.’ The detainees finally shift to the phase where they are deemed fit for release in society. Internal Security Department makes assessment of each detainee on the feedback received from religious counsellors, psychologists, detention centre wardens as well as the ISD case officers, who take into account the magnitude of violent extremism an individual had been involved in.

While the deradicalization process may cease to be implemented in the detention centres, the post-release monitoring is ensured through various means including bar on the duration an individual is entitled to work each day, passing various states with the passage of time. The curfew of 12 hours is a mechanism that ensures compulsive sharing of information regarding change in job or other circumstances worth taking cognizance of. Singaporean authorities are confident that recidivism has been curtailed because of appropriate utilization of resources. Moreover, the singular focus on Islamist terrorists with emphasis on theological discussion and correction is a key to deradicalize those extremists who belong to a sizeable Muslim population in Singapore with links to the other states in the region. The elements that require attention of Singaporean authorities is to pay greater attention to social media that is being relied heavily by emerging militant and radical organizations. Moreover, while the successes in deradicalizing the Islamist extremists is praiseworthy, all emphasis on religious radicalization is not enough as one cannot rule out the possibility of violence and extremism from other communities and groups within Singapore, who also need to be engaged as effectively.

The final Chapter 6 condenses the insights derived from comparative analyses of deradicalization programs implemented in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore and identifies differences inter se. With clearer understanding of difference between disengagement, rehabilitation and deradicalization, the crucial differences are examined before suggesting policy recommendations for Pakistan and other countries to put in place robust deradicalization programs through prudent shifts and filling of gaps. The difference between various deradicalization programs emerge as a result of environment, resources, stake holders and program actors, and deradicalization and rehabilitation. In condensing the outcomes of research, one realization is that because of differences between the outlook of a scholar and that of a practitioner, there is greater need to bring disparate information in sync.

It is concluded after examination of various deradicalization models that there cannot be one standardized model for deradicalization program that fits all countries and states plagued with Islamist terrorism after September 11. This is so because, despite commonalities, there are subtleties and nuances of security considerations that are required to be met in indigenous context by each state for desired outcomes and dividends. Commonalities, on the other hand, are tied to the presence of essential components that form basis of all programs analyzed, which include modules, enforcement, financial considerations, counselling, religious guidance, educational and vocational training, psychological support and post-release monitoring and aftercare.

The final chapter then examines the complex case of Pakistan, where, though nominal efforts to run deradicalization programs were in place after 9/11, the main incentive given to the deradicalization programs came after the military crackdown against militants and terrorists. By June 2018, 689 detainees have benefitted from the deradicalization program from the

Deradicalization Centre in six batches, including the major one called Saboon. The detainees were imparted psychological support and counselling, vocational training, and were prepared for reintegration in society to earn livelihood and sustain their families. It may, however, be understood that in Pakistan, unlike the other states examined, the fear of hard measures aimed at neutralization of terrorists and militants led many of them to surrender voluntarily. In addition, there have been numerous apprehensions and the total number of detainees is in hundreds, which is immensely amplified scale vis-à-vis the other examined states.

Like deradicalization programs implemented in other states, in Pakistan too the initial phase begins with determination of the risk level to be assigned to detainees after psychological examination, which takes into account militants' cognitive, intellectual, emotional and developmental stage. This assessment assumes greater significance for Pakistan as there have been a number of underage militants involved in terrorist acts and suicide bombing. Moreover, evaluation is also carried out for determination of their suitability for deradicalization on the basis of investigation regulating their ideological narratives, their selection in militant organizations, roles that had been assigned to them and their tilt towards extremism.

Selecting the deradicalization program for analysis being run under Saboon, there are broadly four components of the program that span over a period of eighteen months. These components include formal education and religious rectification, technical and vocational training, therapeutic counselling, and social resuscitation (which, like other programs analyzed, includes repeated interactions with not only detainees but their families as well). As a consequence, post deradicalization and reintegration criteria is not uniform and varies from individual to individual dependent on taking into consideration the diverse criteria discussed above. Pakistan mounts

continual surveillance and monitoring (for a minimum period of two years) to check performance of each individuals having undergone the deradicalization program depicts various shades, complemented by helping them in enrolment in educational institutions to finding jobs when necessary. The success of Pakistan's deradicalization effort is attributed to the fact that there have been no reported instances of recidivism but it needs to be noted that this is partly because of military's continued presence in the vulnerable areas. The chapter concludes with policy recommendations for Pakistan and for other states that need to put in place effective deradicalization programs, which include greater involvement of civil society, strategic madrassa reforms, divorcing extremism from politics, and increased international collaboration between states and INGOs.

The thesis effectively examines and analyzes deradicalization efforts of select countries and identifies similarities and lacunas. In doing so, the scholarly and practical aspects of deradicalization program structures as well as their implementation are studied to deduce best practices on methodical and policy basis so that shortcomings in meeting the desired goals are overcome. Differences in programs in various states are essential for solid reintegration of extremists and militants back into society, without the risk of recidivism. In achieving the stated goals, conceptual and definitional haze surrounding deradicalization was cleared. Continued momentum towards international partnerships and exchanges is essential for meeting the global goal of peaceful societies. The thesis bridges various gaps and unites diverse segments of knowledge and offers a new avenue for further research in the area of deradicalization in a unified and coherent manner.